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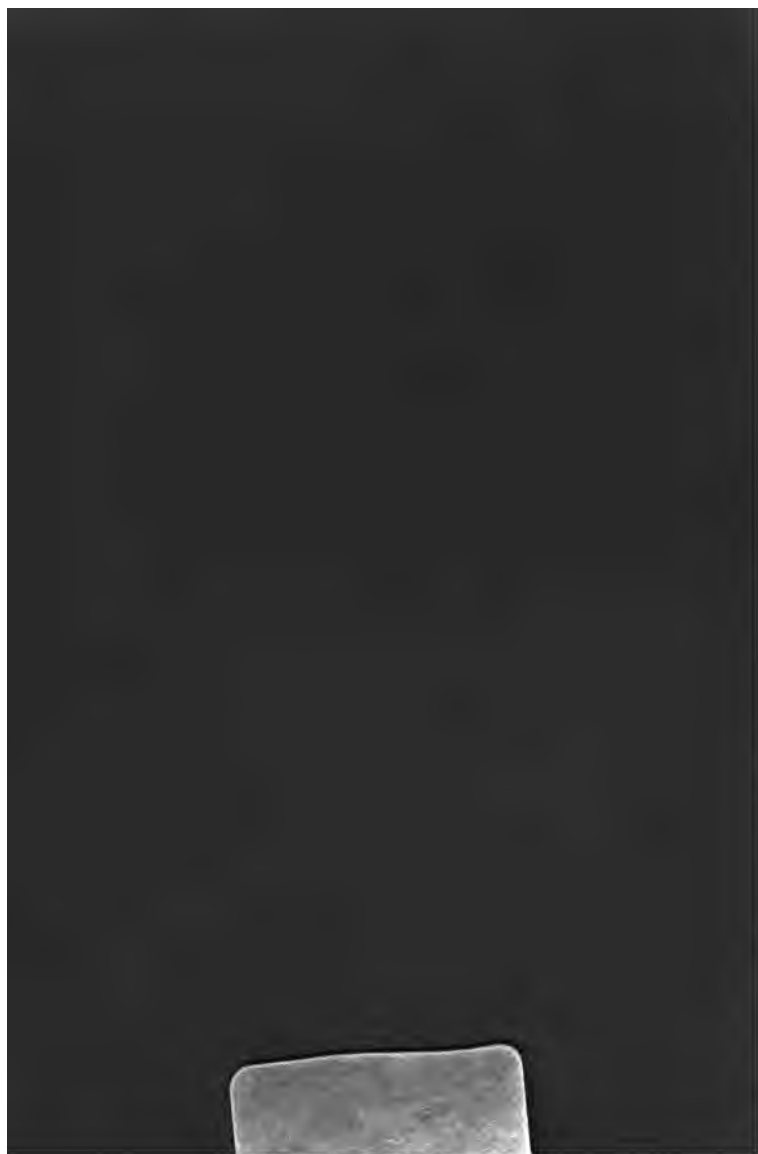
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SOME THOUGHTS
FOR
HOLY WEEK

SPOT







SOME THOUGHTS

FOR

HOLY WEEK.

Published under the Direction of the Tract Committee.

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"Draw me, we will run after Thee: . . . we will be glad and
rejoice in Thee, we will remember Thy love."

Canticles i. 4.

PREFACE.

THE planning of this little work has been the subject of much earnest thought. Commentators differ as to the sequence of events commemorated in Holy Week ; and, after all, exactitude in such a matter is not essential. It has seemed well, therefore, to take one received method without hesitancy, and to gather from it such practical reflections as shall deepen our sense of sin, and heighten our appreciation of the Saviour's love.

It is supposed that all who take up such a book as this, are not mere nominal Christians, but rather true-hearted disciples of the Cross ; who, conscious, perhaps, of many defects, of coldness or lukewarmness, of a tendency to worldliness or self-seeking, have yet a real desire for better things.

It may be that the little volume will fall into the hands of some, whose lot is cast among the ungodly, and who are struggling hard to live for God and Heaven, while tasting but sparingly "of the waters of comfort." Or, it may be read by others who, dwelling amid pleasant surroundings, are unaware of their own shortcomings, and unknowing that the Life of the Spirit has had, as yet, but little growth in their heart.

It is the author's fervent prayer that for all of these various classes of readers this little manual "may be good to the use of edifying," that it may assist each individual soul, whether by the ministry of warning or of counsel, of encouragement or of consolation, to rise to a higher life.

It is suggested that each meditation be entered upon with prayer for the Holy Spirit's guidance. It may be one of the many fervent aspirations from the Psalms, such as Ps. xix. 14, 15, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be always acceptable, in Thy sight, O Lord : my strength, and my Redeemer." Or, the Invocation of the Holy Trinity may be used, as though to call down the aid of each Divine Person for a profitable meditation upon the Inspired Word.

Two meditations are given for each day, either of which can be selected, as all are entirely independent of one another. Or, better still, the reader, having sufficient time at his disposal, may use both of the daily meditations, so that the opening and closing thoughts of every day may be consecrated to Him Who gave Himself at this season without reserve for us.

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Preliminary Meditation.

TO BE USED ON THE EVENING BEFORE

PALM SUNDAY.

WE have come to the verge of Holy Week, the Great Week, as the early Christians also termed it. It is the season in which we commemorate the last cruel sufferings of our Redeemer, borne ungrudgingly for love of us. What shall hinder me from spending it with Him? Shall love of the world, with its various attractions? or fear of the world and its ridicule? No; for it was to deliver me from the snares of the world that my Saviour braved scorn and infamy without a murmur.

Shall my own cold heart hinder me? with its slothfulness and love of ease, its proneness to shrink from self-denial? No; for it was to save me from the corruption of my own heart that Christ my God became "a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief."

Shall the devil hinder me? with his insidious temptations, his plausible excuses? Oh! surely not; for it was to deliver me from the tyranny of Satan that Jesus died; to save me from drifting away into a life of carelessness and sin.

There can be no question with whom it is most fitting that I should spend this Holy Week. I will give it up as far as I am able to my Lord, deeming it a high honour to be allowed to follow Him closely, and to have a share in the bearing of His cross. I will endeavour so to solemnize my thoughts this night, that I may enter upon the Great Week with my mind intently fixed upon Him, and fully resolved to draw nearer and nearer to Him as the sacred days run on.

So will the love of Christ penetrate my heart, and I shall become more closely united to Him, and shall be more worthy, through this union, of the reward which He has in store for His faithful followers.

Oh! may I learn through these seven awful days to value the sacrifice of Calvary, that it may not be found in the Great Day of account to have been made in vain for me! Oh! may

this Silent Week¹ be to me the means, under God, of purifying and elevating my soul,—that, when we are called upon to keep the Feast of Easter, I may indeed have learned to lead the Risen Life, the Life which can triumph over sin and self through the power of the Crucified!

¹ It is called in Germany "Die stille Woche."

Palm Sunday.

1. CHRIST'S ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

A WINDING, rocky road leads from the village of Bethany to the metropolitan city—Jerusalem¹. Here a procession is slowly making its way round the slopes of Olivet. The central figure is a Man riding on an ass, this being the animal mostly used in the East by kings and judges in time of peace.

This Man, meek and lowly in His aspect and bearing, has yet attracted a multitude of followers². Some came with Him from Bethany, and some went out from the city to meet Him. Eager to do Him honour, they cast down their garments before Him, and strew palm branches along His path, crying Hosanna; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

And who is this Man, so gentle, yet so ma-

¹ St. Luke xix. 35-37.

² St. Matt. xxi. 8, 9.

jestic? No wonder the citizens are moved to enquire with one voice "Who is this?"¹ But what must they think when they receive the answer: "This is Jesus the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." His fame has already reached them; they have heard of the miracle by which He raised Lazarus from the dead²; and with enthusiasm they salute Him as a Heaven-sent King³, thus fulfilling the words of the prophet: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee; He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass⁴."

But, even this mead of praise accorded to Jesus Christ excites the jealousy of the Pharisees and Scribes; and they desire Him to silence the people.

His answer is a remarkable one: "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out⁵."

¹ S. Matt. xxi. 10, 11. ² S. John xii. 16-19.

³ S. John xii. 13; S. Luke xix. 38. ⁴ Zech. ix. 9.

⁵ S. Luke xix. 39, 40; S. Matt. xxi. 15, 16.

The Lord from Heaven *must* have His witness on earth. If no human tongue were found to glorify Him, the stones themselves would cry aloud in His honour. And, did they not in very truth bear witness to the Divine power of the Redeemer when, at the time of His crucifixion, all the world being against Him, "the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and graves were opened ¹?"

It was on the sixth day before the last Passover, the day which has ever since been called Palm Sunday, that our Saviour made His grand entry into Jerusalem. This was one of the few flashes of triumph granted to the Son of God during His earthly life; and, after all, it was but a meagre triumph. His heart was heavy with the foreknowledge of all the suffering and grief so soon to overwhelm Him; and He knew (for He can read all hearts) that they who gave Him this ovation to-day would but a few days hence be crying, "Away with this Man," and "Crucify Him."

¹ S. Matt. xxvii. 51, 52.

Truly, their tokens of homage were little worth, yet He did not repel them. It may be that there were some among that wondering crowd, whose service was not absolutely hollow at the time, though they afterwards yielded to surrounding temptations, and turned against Him. And, wherever Christ saw one spark of well-meant fervour, He as surely strove with His Divine breath to fan it into flame. He never broke a bruised reed or quenched the smoking flax¹.

Now, what thoughts can I gather from the great event of Palm Sunday, which shall be of practical use to myself?

We have entered upon the week of our Lord's deepest humiliation, the week in which in His human nature He succumbed to the designs of His malicious enemies and to the power of the devil. But, we Christians know that, in spite of this degradation, He was very God, the Lord of life and death; and, with all the pride of those who stand by an honoured Master, through hours of undeserved reproach, we boldly

¹ Is. xlii. 3.

confess ourselves His followers. We shall have to go with Him through scenes of sore distress; but, to-day we sing loud Hosannas¹ in His praise.

I will strive to make the festive services of this day a reality. My meed of praise shall not be wanting; for I know that He will deign to accept it, though the shouts of angels are ringing in His ears.

"Childlike though the voices be,
And untunable the parts,
He will own the minstrelsy,
If it flow from childlike hearts."

The multitudes confessed the Kingship of the Prophet of Nazareth, and thus bore unconscious tribute to His Godhead by proclaiming Him the Subject of the old prophecies; shall I do less for Him than they? No; I will give myself to the special task of paying honour to my Saviour this day, all the more because for me He humbled Himself even unto death².

But, when this great day is over, shall I then again follow the lead of the populace? O! cruel,

¹ Hosanna means "Save, Lord, and hear." ² Phil. ii. 8.

heartless people! Could I go out with them, and clamour for the blood of the King, Who had come in the name of the Lord¹? Could I be so fickle as to turn against Him; and change my notes of praise to cries of rebuke? I think not, and I fervently hope not. But I must beware.

In a season like the present, it is only by great watchfulness or real fervour that we can avoid inconsistency. If the excitement of to-day's services work me up to a high strain of praise, I must guard against a mere transitory emotion. I must try not to flag during the whole week's vigil. For, how would the world point at me if I, His professed follower, loud in His praises to-day, were to shrink from attendance on my Lord to-morrow? if, after standing by Him in His momentary triumph, I were to turn aside to my own pleasures while I remember how He submitted to scorn and injustice? Oh! never shall it be said of me that I hid my face from Him; that He was despised, and I esteemed Him not².

O Jesus, my Saviour! pour Thy grace into

¹ S. Luke xix. 38.

² Isaiah liii. 3.

my heart, that I may fervently join in the Church's song of praise to Thee this day; and then, with a deepened realization of Thy Godhead, may I go forth with Thee, content to bear Thy reproach, if only I may thus prove my gratitude for Thy boundless love! And oh! when Thou comest in Thy kingdom, may I and all mine be found among Thy faithful subjects; and be permitted, by Thy favour, to stand before Thy Throne with palms in our hands, and to swell the triumphant shout of the Redeemed¹!

2. CHRIST WEeping OVER JERUSALEM.

Palm Sunday, the day of our Lord's earthly triumph, the day on which the multitudes made an ovation for Him and owned Him King; and yet He wept²!

The procession had gone, probably, but a few yards beyond the spot where it was met by

¹ Rev. vii. 9, 10.

² S. Luke xix. 41.

eager crowds, when it paused on a ledge of rock, and took a bird's-eye view of the fair city, which was "the joy of the whole earth¹." The human soul of Jesus was moved to infinite sorrow as He gazed upon the scene, for His Divine Prescience pictured the coming desolation of this beautiful place.

In all the world there were few cities more richly endowed with the gifts of nature, situated, as it was, in a lovely valley surrounded by verdant hills; and, for spiritual privileges, Jerusalem had not her equal. And yet, with all their advantages, the inhabitants were plunged in misbelief and guilt. They were rejecting the Lord of Life, to Whom they owed their all, and were heaping up for themselves an awful retribution.

The sight of the doomed city filled the soul of the world's Redeemer with bitter grief. He could think no more of His own triumph; the cries of "Hosanna" and the vision of the palm branches were as nothing to Him. But the obduracy of the people, whom He yearned to

¹ Ps. xlviii. 2.

save, moved Him to tears, and He cried out to the city of His God, "If thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes¹," &c.

"If thou," the highly favoured, "hadst known"—recognised, acknowledged, "in this thy day", the day of grace, in which God has *visited*² thee with warnings and blessings and opportunities of repentance, "the things which belong unto thy peace," the peace which passeth understanding, and which is the portion of those who wait truly upon Him! "But now they are hid from thine eyes." Thou hast been wilfully blind; now thy day of probation is over, and thou art condemned to judicial blindness.

This prediction has been terribly verified in the miserable condition of the Jews, over whose eyes a veil is drawn when they read the Scriptures.

Then comes the wondrous prophecy, which shews the Godhead of the Speaker, as tears had

¹ S. Luke xix. 42, &c.

² Comp. ver. 44, "Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

proved His humanity. "Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation¹." Here is an emphatic repetition of the cause of the coming destruction of Jerusalem, namely, the blindness of heart which persisted in sinning against light and grace.

So far I have been considering the sad story of the capital of Judea. But what of the spiritual Jerusalem, the Church which the same Redeemer purchased with His blood? Has He still cause to weep for her, for her unhappy divisions, her lamentable shortcomings? In this favoured land of England, in particular, is the Church doing her duty with all faithfulness and diligence? and if not, must I not confess that the defect is due in part to the coldness of individuals?

Let me press the matter home, and ask myself if I be altogether guiltless in this matter. My privileges are many and great; but is there not in me an apathy, a lukewarmness, a want of real interest in the work of the Church, in the religion of the cross? Do I not become engrossed

¹ S. Luke xix. 44.

with worldly pursuits, and leave to others the work of winning souls, and building them up into a holy temple for our God? Oh! surely it is my duty to take some part in such a task as this, though it be but a lowly part. And, should I not deem it a privilege also? for, when the world passes away with its glories and pleasures, these labours of love will receive an everlasting reward and a diadem of fadeless splendour.

The guilt of Jerusalem consisted in unbelief and spiritual blindness. *I* should start back in horror if accused of unbelief. But, where there is but little concern for the religion of Christ, *there* is undoubtedly a lack of a deep and living faith. Perhaps, the world, with its bewitching snares, has hidden the cross from view, has obscured the vision of God and His Home of joy and splendour, has made the things of time appear invaluable, and eternal things of little moment.

Has it really been so with me? Has the film of self-love or the glare of the world passed across my vision, and dimmed for me the brightness and joy of religion? Have the services of

the Church no true relish for me, so that I take no pains to attend them except on Sundays?

Surely, then, it is for want of faith. I do not from my heart acknowledge that in these I may have communion with my God, and receive such grace as shall fit me the better to perform my daily duties by elevating the whole tone of my life.

And do the affairs of this world leave me but little leisure to share the special work of the Good Shepherd in the care of His sheep and lambs? Had I a deep-rooted faith I should desire, though at some sacrifice, to take part in this glorious undertaking.

Every day of spiritual apathy is a day of spiritual loss; the eye of faith becomes more clouded, and less able to value the things which God gives to those who love Him fervently. I will, then, be up and doing while health and strength are mine. I will be no longer blind to my past shortcomings, no longer unconcerned for the things which belong to my peace, lest soon they should be hidden from mine eyes.

“Higher! higher to aspire!
That is all my soul’s desire,
Nearer to the Light and Love
In which Saints and Angels move,
Nearer to the glorious Throne,
And to Him, Who sits thereon,
To perfection, nigher, nigher,
To my Saviour, higher! higher!

Higher! higher! every thought
More into His presence brought,
Every passion, every feeling
More His inner Life revealing,
Less of self from hour to hour,
More of faith’s transforming power,
Yearnings Heavenward, that aspire
Unto Jesus, higher! higher!”

Monsell’s Spiritual Songs.

Monday.

1. CURSING THE BARREN FIG-TREE.

ON His way from Bethany to Jerusalem Jesus was hungry. He had taken upon Him all the infirmities of man's nature, and hunger was one of these. At a little distance He saw a fig-tree having a show of leaves, so He went up to it to look for fruit; but found none, "for the time of figs was not yet¹."

Knowing that it was too early in the season for ripe figs, why (it has been asked) did our Lord go forward, as if expecting to find them? The answer is not far to seek. It was too early in the ordinary course of things both for ripe figs and also for leaves. If, therefore, the latter were to be found, why not also the former? The tree gave remarkable promise by its leafage of early fruit; but it was a promise unfulfilled. Therefore, with Divine authority Christ cursed

¹ S. Mark xi. 12-14.

the barren tree, and cut off with one withering stroke its opportunities of fruitfulness. And the disciples marvelled when they saw how soon the sentence of destruction took effect¹.

The fig-tree is a type of human life. We have, every one of us, our day of grace, in which we may bear fruit, "the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance²;" and, if, when the Judge comes, we be found so doing, we shall hear His gracious word of approval, "Well done, good and faithful servant." But if not, if He look in vain for the "fruits of righteousness" in our lives, then shall we be blasted with an irrevocable sentence—the sentence of eternal fruitlessness.

"Lord, in this Thy mercy's day,
Ere it pass for aye away,
On our knees we fall and pray.

Lord on us Thy Spirit pour
Kneeling lowly at the door,
Ere it close for evermore."

The leaves of the tree represent the religious professions of the individual; and, where pro-

¹ S. Matt. xxi. 18-20. ² Gal. v. 22, 23.

fessions run high, *there* should great care be taken that corresponding fruit be found.

Let me reflect for a few moments how I myself stand in this matter. Perhaps my external conduct is that of a strictly religious person. I take great interest in the Church questions of the day; I am frequent in attendance at the house of prayer; I observe with scrupulous exactness the fasts and festivals. Are these professions real and heart-deep? or hollow and only on the surface?

Unless the fruits of righteousness be seen in my daily life, these outward observances will but bring discredit upon my Christian profession. "To what purpose all this strictness," it will be asked, and not without good reason, "when such an one is no better than others, when the temper is unsubdued, or the tongue unbridled, or vanity and perhaps spiritual pride are but too apparent?"

There are persons always ready to scoff at Church ordinances, persons who boast of "making no professions." Let my conduct prove to them that the leaves of a tree are on no account to be

undervalued, that they have their part to play in protecting the fruit from scorching and rotting; ay, and that even an early show of them is not to be despised.

Christ Himself looked hopefully upon the abundant foliage, and would have deigned to satisfy His human hunger beneath the fig-tree, if fruit had been found thereon. I must not allow myself to be talked out of a steadfast use of externals, or laughed into renouncing my professions. For, was not the holy Samuel allowed, as a child, to minister in the Temple? and did not Daniel, when a mere youth, make a good confession before the heathen monarch and his court?

But, I must look closely into my heart and conduct, and resolutely expel from them all that is contrary to my profession, for then only will the "beauty of holiness"¹ shine in my life, then only shall I adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour².

So doing, I may hope that the Judge, when He comes, will find in me a goodly tree, worthy,

¹ Ps. xvi. 9. ² Tit. ii. 10.

through His merits, to be transplanted into the Paradise of God.

Oh! that the psalmist's description of the righteous man may find its counterpart in me! "His delight is in the law of the Lord: and in His law will he exercise himself day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the water-side: that will bring forth his fruit in due season. His leaf also shall not-wither: and look, whatsoever he doeth, it shall prosper¹."

2. CLEANSING THE TEMPLE.

It wants but a few days to the Passover; and a brisk traffic is going on within the Temple precincts, persons buying animals for sacrifice and exchanging foreign money for Jewish coin, which alone is accepted in payment of the annual tribute. On entering the building, our Lord is moved to righteous indignation at the unhallowed sight². For the second time in His three years' ministry He cleanses His Father's house of those who are shamelessly profaning it.

¹ Ps. i. 2-4.

² S. Mark xi. 15-17.

His complaint is not merely that the Temple has been desecrated by unjust dealing ("Ye have made it a den of thieves¹"); this would have been blamable in the common market; but that it has been made a centre of worldly traffic, or, as He said on the former occasion, "an house of merchandise²."

"The high and lofty One, that inhabiteth Eternity³," deigns to dwell in an especial manner in the places consecrated to His service. Again and again He commanded His chosen people to reverence His sanctuary⁴, and to meet together in the place which He should choose to put His Name there⁵. When Solomon had builded a magnificent Temple, Jehovah accepted its dedication with signs and words of most gracious approval⁶.

Now, who will deny that the sanctity of our places of Christian worship equals, if it does not exceed that of the Temple of God's ancient people, since it is written, "The glory of this

¹ S. Mark xi. 17. ² S. John ii. 16. ³ Is. lvii. 15.

⁴ Lev. xix. 30, xxvi. 2. ⁵ Deut. xii. 5, 11, 26.

⁶ 2 Chron. vii. 12, 15, 16.

latter house shall be greater than of the former¹?" We, too, have had our service of Dedication, by which every nook and corner of the church is hallowed. And more than this; if the Jews had the Shechinah, or cloud of glory in the Temple to denote the Spiritual presence of the Deity², to us is granted a real Spiritual Presence through our Eucharistic office. For when, in Holy Communion, we receive the consecrated bread and wine, the Son of God is giving Himself to be our spiritual Food and Sustenance³.

Can we think of these things and not be struck with amazement at His condescension?

And yet it is no uncommon thing to see persons, professedly religious, conduct themselves in an unseemly manner in church, lounging in listless indifference, smiling, and whispering idle remarks if anything happens to excite their amusement. I hope that *I* am not guilty of any such profanity; but does the very idea fill me with horror? or do I look with apathy on such behaviour? Would that I could say with truth, "The zeal of Thine house hath

¹ Hag. ii. 9. ² 2 Chron. vii. 1, 2. ³ 1 Cor. xi. 23-29.

eaten me up¹," zeal, that is, for Thy house, O God, has consumed me with a burning desire to vindicate its sanctity!

I fear that, with all my pretensions, I am lacking in that reverential awe which becomes a sincere worshipper. If I be guilty of no outward disrespect, yet let me ask myself, Is my worship truly devotional? do I strictly avoid a mere *critical* attention to the service, and *devote* the precious moments to the glory of my God? Nothing short of this, or a steady aim at this will satisfy my Divine Master, Who held His Father's honour dearer than all beside. He will not bear with any worldly thoughts which fill my mind unchecked when praying in the holy place; and mere lip-service will be of no avail.

Again, I must beware of secularizing the place of God's sanctuary when called to it for any other purpose than that of worship. At such times I may solemnize my thoughts on entering in by repeating the words of the patriarch:

¹ S. John ii. 17.

"This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven¹."

There is another aspect of this subject, which must not be passed over. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own²?" As a member of the Catholic Church, I am a temple of the Holy Ghost, dedicated to Him in the Sacrament of Baptism. My whole self, body, soul and spirit, His by rights through creation, has been dedicated to His use. But have I kept myself pure and undefiled, and meet for a dwelling-place of the Deity? Do I bear in remembrance the dignity laid upon me, and carefully guard against everything that might offend Him? A spirit of "temperance, soberness and chastity" should breathe through every act and word and thought, so that, while God honours *me* with His presence, He may Himself be honoured by me. I say it with reverence: He, the all-holy, may be honoured by me, His servant;

¹ Gen. xxviii. 17.

² 1 Cor. vi. 19.

for is it not written, "Them that honour Me I will honour¹?"

Perhaps I have been guilty of over-indulgence in the care of my body, giving too much thought to appearances or to frivolous pleasures, yielding unduly to dainty fancies in the matter of meat and drink. Is not such self-love unworthy of my high estate? Oh! surely I shall do well to take heed lest I provoke the Holy One to withdraw His presence from a temple thus defiled!

But a bare sense of duty makes self-restraint a hard task; I must aim at something higher. Let me meditate humbly and frequently upon the privilege which is mine through the indwelling of my God. So shall I rejoice more and more in the consecration of my whole self, with every faculty and sense, to "the High and lofty One," Who vouchsafes to "dwell with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit²."

"O God, Who didst give Thy only Son to be unto us an ensample of godly life, fill my soul

¹ 1 Sam. ii. 30; 1 Pet. ii. 11, 12. ² Isaiah lviii. 15.

with a burning zeal for Thy honour; that I may reverence Thy sanctuary and all else that belongs to Thee, and may purify myself, and so become a fitting Temple for Thy indwelling Presence. And then, O God, do Thou abide with me for ever, for Jesus Christ's sake."

Tuesday.

1. THE SPIRIT OF FORGIVENESS.

ON several occasions our Lord spoke to His disciples upon the importance of cultivating a spirit of forgiveness. To-day, after showing the need of faith to make prayer effectual, He adds : "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in Heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in Heaven forgive your trespasses¹."

When could our dear Lord have enforced His lesson of forgiveness so eloquently as now, when He was on the eve of purchasing pardon for His enemies, ay, for a world of sinners, by untold sufferings and a cruel death?

The whole question of forgiveness revolves upon the Christ-like virtue of charity or love.

¹ S. Mark xi. 25, 26.

Where true love is, *there* will be deep and lasting forgiveness; for "charity suffereth long, and is kind;" "charity is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil¹." And this virtue, love to God and man, is of the essence of the Christian life. It was the Saviour Himself Who gave the new commandment: "That ye love one another, as I have loved you²."

Now, what is it that makes the duty of forgiveness a hard duty? Is it not the absence of the spirit of love? The hard, unloving hearts among us are the least ready to forgive, the most apt to take revenge.

How is it with myself? Is it my habit to bear in remembrance any ill which has been done to me? If so, I harbour a feeling which will fester like a wound, and end perhaps, if it do not begin, with a desire for retaliation. In such a mood, how can I be fit to kneel before my God, and sue for pardon for my own shortcomings?

There are two or three considerations which

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5.

² S. John xv. 12.

will show the folly as well as the sin of an unforgiving spirit.

1. Be the harm done to us ever so great, it is infinitely less than the offences which we daily commit against our Father in Heaven. Yet He is ever ready to hear our cries for mercy. 2. The evil which we resent is often nothing more than a *supposed* evil; some one tells us, perhaps, that a neighbour has worked us ill, or spoken a word in our disfavour, and we take it all for granted, and harp upon the groundless information. Would it not be better to speak face to face with the supposed offender, and ascertain if there be truth in the report? 3. Not unfrequently the mischief done to us is unintentional; and, if so, it ought surely to be lightly passed over. May be, our reputed enemy is absolutely guiltless in the matter, having intended us no harm. Would it not be well to give him a chance of clearing himself?

“Admonish a friend,” said the Son of Sirach; “it may be he hath not done it; and if he have done it, that he do it no more Admonish a friend: for many times it is a

slander, and believe not every tale. There is one that slippeth in his speech, but not from his heart; and who is he that hath not offended with his tongue¹?"

Lastly, when it is well ascertained that mischief has been deliberately planned, there is still not a shadow of excuse for resentment; for the Christian grace of love expends itself not only upon friends, but upon enemies. "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you²."

Sometimes it is best to pass the affair over in silence, endeavouring, not only to forgive, but also to forget. But if it be judged wisest to bring the offender to task, it must be done in perfect kindness, and for the single purpose of mutual reconciliation. What more kindly method could be devised than that recommended by our Lord, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault *between thee and him alone*: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother³?"

¹ Eccclus. xix. 13, 15, 16. ² S. Matt. v. 44. ³ S. Matt. xviii. 15.

How different is this from the noisy, outspoken reproof, the too-common fault-finding in the presence of others!

Let me endeavour to take home this lesson of forgiveness, which, suitable as it is for all times and seasons, tones in especially with the events of the Holy Week. What would become of us "miserable sinners" were it not for the forgiveness which poured as a refreshing stream from the hill of Calvary? Where should we be if the Saviour had not cried aloud in the midst of His death-throes, "Father, forgive them." And, can *I* lay claim to the pardon so dearly purchased, and yet refuse a full and free forgiveness of any who have offended me in word or deed?

But, perhaps I meet with daily provocations through living with persons, whose habits and dispositions are not congenial with mine. This is a trial which many have to bear; and though petty in itself, it is distressing from its perpetual recurrence. Now the remedy is to a great extent in my own hands. 1. I should reason with myself that possibly my ways are as annoying to my companions as theirs are to me; and that,

in a world so full of great and grievous troubles, I should look upon this as a very light cross, if it be a cross at all. Surely I would not be rid of it, if to bear it meekly be a mark of the true disciple¹. 2. I should guard against readily taking offence. Many a person, who would not do anything to hurt another's feelings, is far too apt to be wounded by any slight which he supposes to be passed upon himself. This constant *look-out* for discourtesies gnaws at the heart, depresses the spirit, and tends' to ruffle the temper. Ay, it too often makes a man *see* incivility or ill-will where nothing of the kind is intended. For, fretting thus over our own wrongs distorts the mental vision, so that it conjures up all sorts of grievance. I must, indeed, beware of so miserable a state, lest I provoke God to send me some heavy trial to cure me of my fault.

What a world of peace and content would this be if giving and taking offence were things unheard of! Let me strive in my little sphere to bring about this happy consummation, following

¹ S. Luke ix. 23.

always the Divine pattern of Him Who came to be "our Peace¹."

The best way of abstaining from vengeful acts and disparaging words is to discourage every unkind thought and feeling. It may not be easy at first, but the conquest over self is worth a hard struggle, for it brings a lasting "peace, which passeth understanding."

"He that ruleth his spirit," says the word of inspiration, "is better than he that taketh a city²." Oh! when shall I have my spirit so well under control that no outward circumstances shall have power to ruffle me? When shall I find it in my heart to bear all men, friends and foes alike, before the Throne of grace, interceding for them as "brethren dearly beloved?"

Then, but not till then shall I confidently pray the prayer of Faith, assured that my Father in Heaven will hear me for His dear Son's sake.

¹ Eph. ii. 14; Comp. Col. iii. 12, 13. ² Prov. xvi. 32.

2. THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS.

"Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour¹." Here is the first terrible foretaste of the agony of Gethsemane; here is the shadow of the coming cross. The human soul of the Son of God is bowed with the weight of a world's transgressions, which in the fulness of His mercy He has taken upon Himself.

The human side of our Lord's Being is brought out strongly in this petition. "Father, save Me from this hour;" the hour which led up to crucifixion, the supreme moment when the redemption of the world was to be accomplished with the price of the Redeemer's blood. In awe and dread He looks forward to the trial, and groans for deliverance.

But the cry is scarcely uttered when He changes His tone: "But for this cause came I unto this hour." It was in order to endure the anguish, and so to rescue our fallen world, that

¹ S. John xii. 27.

He had come to His passion. Why shrink from drinking the bitter cup to its dregs? Then, as if by sudden inspiration, breaks forth the ardent longing for His Father's honour, at whatever cost to Himself: "Father, glorify Thy Name¹." And a voice from Heaven replies: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." The Father had already been magnified through the marvellous life of His Son on Earth, and now He is about to be magnified again in His willing obedience even unto death².

While contemplating the Saviour's agony it seems presumptuous to give so much as a passing thought to any trials of my own. And yet I am sure that He desires me to draw a practical lesson from this record of His sufferings. Be my trials what they may, He would have me learn from Him to bear them gladly.

First, then, be it observed, there is no harm in flying to our Heavenly Father with a petition for deliverance. He bids us to cast our burden upon Him³, in simple trust that He will either

¹ S. John xii. 28. ² S. John xvii. 4, 25, 26. ³ Ps. lv. 22.

take it away, or sustain us under it, that He will remove the cup from us, or send an angel from Heaven to strengthen us¹.

But, simultaneously with the prayer for deliverance must come the ready acquiescence in the Divine will. I may be sure that there is an object in every cross, which is laid upon me; and that "for this cause came I unto this hour." Can I not bring myself to add with ever ready fervour: "Father, glorify Thy Name, glorify it in me Thy child by helping me to a perfect self-surrender to Thy holy will?"

It is not easy in the day of prosperity to say these words with any depth of meaning, because it is impossible to realize the severe trials of life before they overshadow us. And yet it is essential to prepare for them beforehand if we would not be overwhelmed when the evil day arrives. How shall we better prepare than by seeking God's guidance from the first, praying Him to lead us along any path that He will, only keeping close by our side that we slip not.

¹ S. Luke xxii. 42-43.

"Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be;
Lead me by Thine own Hand,
Choose out the path for me.

Smooth let it be, or rough
It will be still the best;
Winding, or strait, it leads
Right onward to Thy rest."

Is it not possible that the meditations of this week may lead me to long for a share in my Saviour's sufferings, so that I may be thereby conformed to His likeness¹? At any rate, if I cannot arrive all at once at this fervour of devotion, I will strive to acquire a spirit of cheerful resignation, hoping to be able as years roll on to "glory in tribulations also²." And I may remember, to my unspeakable comfort, that troubles will ever be meted out to me by One Who can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," since He was pre-eminently the "Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief³."

"O child, whom I have loved, as never mother loved her own,
O child, whom I have pleaded for at Heaven's eternal Throne,
Think not thy soul can brook to lose one pang I send to thee,
Know that thy griefs and sorrows all are measured out by Me.

¹ Phil. iii. 8-10.

² Rom. v. 3; 2 Cor. xii. 10.

³ Isaiah liii. 3.

Each anxious thought, each sleepless night, each unrefreshing
prayer,
Each bitter tear thou shedd'st on earth are in high Heaven
My care;

Each great bereavement, shaking the foundations of thy life,
Each unsuccess, each calumny, and all thy weary strife;

I know them all, I send them all, for very love for thee;
Take them, My child, as from My Hand, but take them
thankfully;

Be thankful for thy joys, but most be thankful for thy woe,
For he, who ne'er felt grief on Earth, ne'er joy in Heaven can
know¹."

¹ Legenda Monastica.

Wednesday.

1. THE COVENANT TO BETRAY JESUS.

“THEN one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him¹.”

It was one of the twelve favoured disciples of the Lord who thus conspired with His open enemies to put Him to death, one who had gone about with Him for three years, had seen His works of might and mercy, had witnessed His holiness of life, and had been the recipient of countless blessings. If there were any who should have stood by their Master to the end, surely Judas should have been one of them; for he had heard His divine discourses, had listened to His warnings against temptation, and to His promises of eternal reward to the Faithful.

¹ S. Matt. xxvi. 14-16.

Ay, and just before the final struggle, he sat with Him at His own table in the mysterious, parting Feast.

For thirty pieces of silver Judas sold his Lord. What fearful odds! The chief priests and captains of the Temple must have smiled as they reckoned their advantage, though they could little appreciate the loss that the Apostle was incurring. And all this came of yielding by slow degrees to what some people call a little sin.

Here is the secret of the very blackest crimes. By little and little men are lured into evil; they play, as it were, with the adversary of souls, till they become so in love with sin, that they cherish it in their heart, though it sting like a serpent. Thus they drive away the God, Whose indwelling presence lightens every burden, tempers affliction, and sanctifies the whole being.

“And from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him¹.” Hitherto, perhaps, he had deceived himself with the notion that he was

¹ S. Matt. xxvi. 16.

doing no wrong; but now he deliberately ranges himself on the side of his Master's foes. To-day he makes an agreement with them; to-morrow he leads them out with an armed multitude to the garden, where his long-suffering Lord is passing a night of agony; goes up to Him, and with the foul design of pointing Him out for destruction, salutes Him with a kiss and a word of seeming welcome.'

Oh! the loathing that the pure mind of Jesus must have felt for the traitor's kiss! A bold attack would have been less ignominious. "It is not an open enemy, that hath done Me this dishonour: for then I could have borne it. Neither was it Mine adversary, that did magnify himself against Me: for then peradventure I would have hid myself from him. But it was even thou, My companion . . . and Mine own familiar friend¹."

And yet, even now, there is no thrusting off the traitor with a harsh reproof; no; we hear rather the tender rebuke of One Who still yearns for the recovery of the false friend. But the

¹ Ps. lv. 12-14.

gentle accents, "Friend, wherefore art thou come¹?" fall on dull ears, for Judas is wholly possessed of the Evil One.

And are there no traitors among ourselves? none who are ready for some paltry gain to expose their Divine Master to the derision of His foes? "Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me²." This terrible assertion might be made in these nineteenth-century days with no less truth than when uttered at the Passover Supper. It will be well for me to enquire without delay, "Master, is it I?" But oh! let me do so with great sorrow and searching of heart, waiting humbly for the reply. And may it never come to me as it came to Judas in the awful declaration, "Thou hast said!"

I may not be, perhaps, so hardened as the traitor; and yet there may be even now some secret sin lurking within me which is eating away my spiritual life, and drawing me off from allegiance to my Lord. "What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you³?" is

¹ S. Matt. xxvi. 47-50.

² S. Matt. xxvi. 21.

³ S. Matt. xxvi. 15.

a bargain all too common. Gain, gain ! a little of the gold that glitters, a little pleasure, a little fame, anything, in short, that the world has to offer, and Jesus is too readily betrayed.

As a member of Christ's Holy Church I am one of His favoured disciples ; from childhood I have had Him ever by my side ; I have been always a welcome guest at His Table, and have shared His confidences. What sorrow would it cost Him to find in me, not the true-hearted friend, but the hypocrite, deceiving others and perhaps myself also, though Him I can never deceive ! It may be that I go to Holy Communion, and there pretend to offer up myself, "a reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice" unto God, and come away, wrapt up as much as ever in my own affairs. Can it be that, while partaking of the Altar-bread, and thus giving to Jesus, as it were, a lodging within me, I am leaving the door of my heart ajar, so that Satan will glide in unnoticed, and set up a rival throne ? Ah ! then indeed shall I go out into the world, prepared to give my Lord the treacherous kiss, delivering up Him and His

religion to the scorn of those who seek to do Him evil.

Bitter, indeed, will it be to hear that mournful reproach spoken of myself, "yea, even Mine own familiar friend, whom I trusted, who did also eat of My bread, hath laid great wait for Me¹."

I must beware of giving way little by little to sin, and of allowing any allegiance to Christ for one moment to flag or falter; lest, like Judas, I fall from a pinnacle of blessedness into the abyss of eternal woe!

"Alas! how little they can know
The end of the beginning,
Who calculate how far to go
Into the ways of sinning:—
Turn to Aceldama, and there
Witness the suicide's despair!

O! Saviour, teach us how to take
Warning from that offender;
And keep our souls for Thy dear sake,
To Thee still true and tender;
Lest, turning wilfully away,
We leave Thy Table to betray.

¹ Ps. xli. 9.

One downward course of early sin
Indulged in or neglected,
One look of love—our hearts to win
Back to Thy side—rejected,
May our souls' separation be
Eternally, O God, from Thee!"

MonseU's Spiritual Songs.

2. CHRIST'S USE OF HOLY WEEK.

"In the day time He was teaching in the temple; and at night He went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives¹."

This was the manner in which our great Exemplar spent the last few days of His earthly life; and there are two especial points to be noted here. Our Lord had a stupendous task before Him, a task whose consequences were of infinite moment to every soul through all the ages of the world. There was also a sorrow of enormous magnitude approaching very near; one which, with unerring foreknowledge, He

¹ S. Luke xxi. 37.

knew to be on the verge of breaking, like a thunder-cloud, over His head.

And what was His attitude? Did the thought of either the one or the other unfit Him for present duties? No; we find Him teaching day by day in the temple, thus giving up the day hours to the service of those who came to hear Him¹; and passing the nights in retirement. Doubtless in the stillness of these moonlight hours He communed with His Father in secret, thereby strengthening Himself for the performance of His great task and for the willing endurance of His awful trial. For, the weight of His coming trial was in no way underrated by the Divine Sufferer: "I have a baptism to be baptized with," He had said; "and how am I straitened till it be accomplished²."

Now, I cannot but think that there are two very valuable lessons to be learned from these considerations. 1. Most of us are apt when we have a great undertaking on hand, to be completely absorbed by it, so absorbed, that we neglect other (shall I say commoner?) duties in

¹ S. Luke xxi. 38.

² S. Luke xii. 50.

consequence. This is clearly wrong. Be the one great enterprise what it may, the daily round of less conspicuous duties must not be slurred over. The people who flocked to the Temple were never disappointed of their desire to sit at the feet of Jesus, though the hour of His tremendous sacrifice was well-nigh come. But when *I* am about some noble pursuit, is no one the loser? Perhaps I am engaged in a labour of love among the sick and poor; or, with a yearning for souls, am occupied in a mission among the courts of a city; and what more glorious work can be conceived? But am I careful that such tasks interfere not with the duties which naturally devolve upon me? Are there no parents at home, who may rightly claim a portion of the time which I give to my self-imposed task? no younger brothers and sisters to whom I ought to devote some of the hours which I have hitherto grudged them?

It is true that home duties are often selfishly made an excuse for refusing to join in works of piety and charity beyond the home circle; but

this is a fault of another type, and does not touch the question in point¹.

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven²." By a little contrivance and consistent self-denial, duties *within* the home and holy tasks *without* will be found generally compatible. "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone³."

2. Our second observation is upon the attitude of the Lord Jesus in presence of an overwhelming trial. From Him we learn that sorrow must not make us selfish. No one could ever look forward into the depths of his own coming troubles and realize their intensity as He could; and no one, therefore, has ever had so good cause to be completely engrossed with them. And yet the "Man of Sorrows" looked constantly off from self, labouring abundantly for the good of others.

How prone am I when trials stare me in the face to dwell morbidly upon them, and sink into

¹ It is alluded to in the second meditation for Palm Sunday.

² Eccl. iii. 1.

³ S. Matt. xxiii. 23.

a state of lassitude! Better far would it be to apply myself to each day's duties with a cheerful spirit. The unselfishness of such a course would be an unfailing source of comfort.

But one thing I must always bear in mind, that, if I would obtain strength for the performance of a hard task or for the endurance of a heavy trial, I must seek it untiringly in prayer. "At night He went out and abode in the Mount." And there, through communing secretly with His Father, the Sinless Sufferer became endued with a power, which enabled Him gladly to offer Himself a sacrifice for sin, to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows¹.

But do *I* ever pray as He prayed? Do I wrestle with God in prayer? Do I fall prostrate and implore His grace to enable me to labour and to suffer according to His will? Ah! this is the question. All my power both *to do* and *to bear* must come from God, and can come only through communion with Him, and in answer to the prayer of Faith.

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew

¹ Isaiah liii. 4.

their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint¹." Oh! that I may be among these blessed ones! grant it, good Lord, I beseech Thee!

¹ Isaiah xl. 31.

Thursday.

1. THE LAST SUPPER.

THE last paschal supper at which the World's Redeemer was to take a part¹! There is something touching in any act performed for the last time, and particularly so when it is an act of fellowship. The last meeting with friends and trusted companions round the festal board; and, in this case it was the last commemoration with them of an ancient rite. For it was at this very supper that Christ ordained the Sacrament of His Body and Blood² to substitute thenceforth the Jewish feast of the Passover.

What a privilege for the Twelve to be present! and yet they seem not to have sufficiently appreciated it. Ere another four and twenty hours were passed, one of them had shamefully betrayed his Master³, another had thrice denied Him⁴; three had slept when bidden to watch with Him⁵, and all had forsaken Him, and fled⁶.

¹ S. Luke xxii. 14, 15. ² S. Luke xxii. 19, 20.

³ S. Matt. xxvi. 47-49; ⁴ Ib. 69-74; ⁵ Ib. 40; ⁶ Ib. 56.

I feel dismayed when I recount such conduct, and wonder how He, who knew what was in every heart, and foreknew what each man's action would be throughout the impending trial, could condescend to entertain them at His Table.

But let me pause, and ask myself if I am in any better case than they. Of all the Twelve, Judas alone was thoroughly bad at heart; the rest, though but frail men, subject to like passions with ourselves, loved their Master with no common love, and devoted their lives without stint to His service.

But what of us who flock to our altars in these latter days? We accept the gracious invitation to a Heavenly banquet. But how do we go to it? With hearts and minds well tuned to the solemnity of the occasion, or in harmony rather with the affairs of Time? We ought to feel a thrill of gratitude for the honour conferred upon us by the invitation. And yet I fear, speaking at any rate of myself (for it is myself that I know the most intimately), I fear that my Saviour must look to me in vain for warmth of either gratitude or love.

Too often, when the world has been engrossing me for six successive days, I come on the Sunday with but little thought or preparation, place myself very near to His Board, and expect to be served with "the Children's Bread." Must I wonder if He looks reprovingly on such a guest, and asks: "Friend, wherefore art thou come? Is it, indeed, to do Me honour? Is it to plead My sacrifice before Heaven in all humility? Is it to be made one with Me in an abiding communion? Nay, but art thou not come as a mere matter of form or habit? because there are persons who are pleased to see thee here, or because it would look strange in *thee* to stay away? Or perhaps (for I will give thee credit for *some* sense of right), because thou hast learned from childhood to obey My command, 'This do in remembrance of Me;' and therefore *as a matter of course* thou comest. Oh! think not that such motives as these will bring the unspeakable blessing that I promise to the earnest communicant."

Yet, it is to be feared that in these days of frequent Celebrations, there is too much laxity

in individual preparation. It may not be needful or even desirable to go through long forms of preparation, but there should be before each Communion a discovery of every fault which has found its way into the heart and life, and a full confession of it to Him¹, "from Whom no secrets are hid." And then, with the mind intent upon rooting out the evil, we may kneel at the Eucharistic feast, and there receive grace to go out, as it were, with our Master into the chill night, and watch with Him, and serve Him to the end.

Perhaps I shall do well to gauge my earnestness by noting how far I am willing to deny myself in order to do reverence to my Lord in His Holy Sacrament. For instance, I may receive it early in the morning with my mind fresh and unoccupied, or later on when my spirit is, perhaps, more or less ruffled by contact with others. Doubtless it is quite possible to go seriously to a midday celebration; but in all probability the early attendance involves more self-denial; if so, it becomes an act of greater homage, and a surer test of reverential love.

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 27, 28.

Surely, he who considers what it is that he is invited to commemorate, and what to receive at the Holy Table, will ever go in fear and trembling, and yet with confiding trust.

“It is my Maker, dare I stay?
My Saviour, dare I turn away¹!”

Then there is the question as to frequency of participation; one which is, perhaps, best solved by each man's conscience. To communicate frequently, but without great sincerity of purpose, is a dangerous thing; but they whose hearts are given to Christ, and who long and strive to reach higher and higher in the spiritual life, may kneel again and again at His table², and there find that intimate union with Him³, which will enable them to “go from strength to strength⁴.”

Oh! would that I had been always of this mind. Alas! too often have I turned a deaf ear to the invitation, or responded to it with a cold and lifeless formality; and the blessed food of the Sacrament has afforded me no nourish-

¹ Christian Year.

² S. John vi. 55, 56. ³ S. John xv. 5. ⁴ Ps. lxxxiv. 7.

ment, because I have gone unprepared to digest it. May it never do so again!

Jesus is continually calling me. Ah! when shall I reply with true and deep devotion, "Draw me, we will run after Thee¹?" I think that I can almost do so now. This *Still Week* is doing its work for me, I humbly trust. Not in vain have I gone with my Saviour to the brink of His great trouble, and seen Him face His sorrows. His love is beginning to awaken some response in my heart; and I long to know more than heretofore the preciousness of His Presence.

"O Love Divine, how sweet Thou art!
When shall I find my willing heart
All taken up by Thee?
I thirst, I faint, I die to prove
The greatness of redeeming love,
The love of Christ to me."

2. THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN.

Out in the Garden in the dead of night the tender heart of Him, Who is all love and gentleness, is wrung with bitter grief². Sorrows are

¹ Cant. i. 4.

² S. Matt. xxvi. 36-38.

accumulating, and an awful struggle is going on within Him, a struggle between the dread of impending woe and the ardour of obedience. He is so agonized that "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground¹." Is there no one to solace Him in this hour of anguish? no well-tried friend who will deem it a privilege to stay by His side and minister consolation?

There are three disciples whom He has singled out for special favour, to whom but a short time since He showed His glory on the mountain-top². He has brought them out with Him to-night, and He asks them, almost as a suppliant, to tarry and watch with Him. Surely these trusted companions will be true to the Sufferer; one would think that it needed no request. One of them had, in fact, but lately declared, "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death³."

Yet how is it now? Jesus moves off a little way, offers up a prayer of intense earnestness to His Father; then, returning to His three dis-

¹ S. Luke xxii. 44.

² S. Luke ix. 28-36.

³ S. Luke xxii. 33.

ciples, finds them sleeping. He comes to claim their sympathy, but is forced to speak the sad rebuke, "Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour¹?" Again, Jesus departs, and, on His second return, finds the disciples still asleep. Oh! the coldness of their love! He, their best Friend and Master, passing through a period of intense anguish, and yet they leave Him to bear it alone, and quietly take their rest. Their eyes are heavy, and, for very shame, they know not what to answer Him². A third time Jesus comes, and now He utters the saddest word of all: "Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners³." Take your rest, if you have the heart to do so while I am in My agony; sleep on, for it is too late to watch with Me. I ask no more of you, the time for asking is over. "I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold⁴."

We wonder at the seeming apathy of these

¹ S. Mark xiv. 37, 38.

² S. Mark xiv. 39, 40.

³ S. Mark xiv. 41.

⁴ Isaiah lxiii. 5.

Apostles; but should we not rather look at home and take blame for our own indifference to everything that concerns our Divine Master? If a friend whom we dearly loved were passing through some grievous trouble, would it not be an inestimable pleasure to be permitted to remain by his side, and cheer him with tender words of sympathy and comfort? One can conceive nothing more beautiful than to be the intimate friend and companion of a holy soul under suffering and persecution.

And this office may be mine. With all reverence I say it, Jesus has asked me to stand by Him through this week of suffering; has led me out into the garden and bidden me to watch with Him, to leave the world and its attractions just for a little space, and fix my mind intently upon Him and His tremendous sacrifice. Shall I grudge the time thus spent? Ah! truly I should be worse than His disciples if I did so. It was "for sorrow" that they slept¹; and in His long-suffering He took note of this: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak²." But

¹ S. Luke xxii. 45.

² S. Matt. xxvi. 41.

if the week's vigil seem all too long for *me*, I surely cannot plead the same excuse. For, is my heart really sorrowful at the thought of all my Saviour's woe? Alas! it is too likely to be the hankering after worldly pursuits that makes me long for the relief of Easter. And yet it was for me that all this anguish was endured.

O Jesus! Who didst condescend to bear unutterable woe for us, and dost bid us by the voice of Thy Church to commemorate at this time Thy cross and passion, give me grace to keep close by Thy side, and to suffer shame and reproach rather than forsake Thee in this week of Thy humiliation. Oh! strengthen me, that I neither faint nor falter through this long vigil. Help me to go with Thee, Lord, and see Thee through Thine agony, Thy judicial trials and Thy Crucifixion, and then to keep guard by Thy tomb till Thou shalt rise triumphant over death. And oh! may I never have cause to confess with tears that for lack of me *Thou hast trodden the winepress alone*¹.

¹ Isaiah lxiii. 3.

“ ‘Ye have not chosen Me,’ he saith,
‘But I have chosen you.’
O wondrous Love, half-willing souls
Unwearying to pursue.
O happy souls that hear that Voice,
Nor drive the call away,
Responding, ‘My Beloved is mine,
And I am His for aye.’ ”

Legenda Monastica.

Good Friday.

1. THE BLINDFOLDING OF JESUS.

WHO that has any sense of justice is not horrified at the sight of an innocent person falsely accused, tried and actually condemned? Who does not feel his blood boil within him, and groan with half-suppressed wrath, as the victim is borne away to prison or to death? Yet here we see the Sinless Man, the only sinless man that ever breathed, taken before several tribunals, and finally sentenced to the death of a criminal¹. Most touchingly does the Evangelical Prophet foretell the circumstances², giving due prominence to the cause which led to them—the sins of a guilty world.

But what should we say, if in addition to the unjust condemnation the innocent victim were surrounded by a brutal mob, mocked and spat

¹ S. Luke xxiii. 1-25.

² Isaiah liii. 6-8.

upon? nay, if the very servants who had the charge of him blindfolded their prisoner, struck him on the face, and then derisively bade him to reveal who it was that smote him¹? Yet these fresh insults were heaped upon the Saviour, with a blasphemous allusion to His profession of Divine Omniscience; and with exquisite patience He bore them all. "I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting²."

Horrible as the reflection is, I must force myself this Good Friday morning to think over the part that *I* have taken in this shameless treatment of my Master and Redeemer. For my sake and in my stead He was sacrificed; yet have I not too often mocked Him, pretending a love for His religion, but in my heart despising or deriding it? Blasphemy seems a hard word, but if I speak or think irreverently of sacred things, I am, alas, guilty of the sin.

But do I ever attempt to cover my Saviour's

¹ S. Luke xxii. 63-65.

² Isaiah l. 6.

Face, that I may buffet Him unseen? The very idea is appalling. And yet it is too true that I have sinned again and again with the multitude, flattering myself that I was no worse than others, and that, therefore, even the All-seeing eye would never single me out. Or, perhaps I have fancied that evil thoughts would be passed over, provided they broke not out into evil deeds; forgetting that, blindfold Him as we may, we cannot deceive the Searcher of hearts. "For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart¹."

To trifle with any sin, and call it by some palliating name, this is to challenge Christ to declare *who* is thus insolently smiting Him. Maybe He will keep silence now, and leave me to go on with these petty provocations; maybe He will bear long with me, and I shall think that my faults are hidden from His eyes. But He knows every hand that strikes a blow; and terrible will be the vengeance on the great day of account, when the secrets of all hearts will be

¹ 1 Sam. xvi. 7; Jer. xvii. 10.

judged¹, and the wrath of the Lamb will descend upon those who have slighted His salvation².

“Great Judge, to Thee our prayers we pour
In deep abasement bending;
O shield us through that last dread hour,
Thy wondrous love extending:
May we, in this our trial day,
With faithful hearts Thy Word obey,
And thus prepare to meet Thee.”

2. THE PERFECT SACRIFICE.

“And they crucified Him. . . And sitting down they watched Him there; and set up over His head His accusation, written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS³.” In derision they wrote this, but it was a striking truth, a witness borne unconsciously by Christ’s enemies to the efficacy of the atonement. “This is Jesus,” that is *Saviour*; *their* Saviour, if they would; *for in His love and in His pity He died to redeem them*⁴.

On the cross He hung three awful hours till, with perfect assurance of the completeness of His work, He could cry, “It is finished⁵.” The

¹ Isaiah lxiii. 4; Rom. ii. 16. ² Rev. vi. 16, 17.

³ S. Matt. xxvii. 35-37. ⁴ Ia. lxiii. 9. ⁵ S. John xix. 30.

moment was come, of which prophets had prophesied, and which types had typefied ever since the Fall of Man. Finished was the stupendous plan formed in the eternal counsels of Heaven before the creation of the world. Finished the wondrous reconciliation between man and his offended God.

Let me dwell now upon this one fact only, and endeavour to awaken in myself a truer appreciation of the Sacrifice of Calvary. I would rather not think upon myself in any way at the present time; no, not even upon my sins and shortcomings. I would fix my mind's eye upon the Cross and upon Him who hung thereon, loaded with the weight of my sins. Yet how shall I estimate the infinite compassion which could move Him to undergo for my sake the fierceness of His Father's wrath, that Father Who had loved Him from all eternity¹? I want to learn to put my whole trust in Him; not in any merits of my own, for in very truth I have none. Well assured that I deserve nothing at His hands, I

¹ S. John xvii. 24.

must go to Him for pardon of sins past, for strength to overcome temptation in the future, and for a favourable reception in the Day of Judgment.

“Jesus, our Lord, is crucified,” and crucified for me, if I will have Him for my Saviour. It is a free salvation that He offers, but it is for those only who care to accept it, who *will* that which He wills, namely their sanctification¹. “Christ Jesus is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption².”

Help me, dear and only Saviour, to cling to Thy precious Cross ; to cling to it in prosperity, that joys may be sanctified ; in tribulation, that trials may be blessed ; in youth, that I may live the life of Faith ; in age, that I may die the death of the righteous !

“Bind us to it, Holy Jesu,
Let us ever hold it fast,
Cling to it in sin and sorrow ;
And when life is well-nigh past,
Stretched upon its bosom, float us
O'er death's stream to Thee at last !”

Legenda Monastica.

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 3, 4.

² 1 Cor. i. 30.

Easter Eve.

1. JESUS IN THE TOMB.

“IN the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus¹.” This was done in the evening of the crucifixion day. And there lay the Spotless Victim of calumny, hatred and injustice, until the third day, when, having seen no corruption, He raised Himself up according to His own predictions².

The fact that the Sacred Body of our Lord rested peacefully in the tomb is a fact full of meaning for us. Some people feel a natural shrinking from death. “The cold silence of the grave” is an expression which inspires most of us with a mysterious dread. But, if we will devoutly contemplate the burial of our Lord we shall gradually have unfolded before our eyes

¹ S. John xix. 41, 42.

² Ps. xvi. 11; S. Matt. xx. 19; S. John ii. 19.

the halo which His presence sheds round the tomb; we shall learn that since He, Who is the "Light of the World¹," was a tenant of the grave, it is no longer a dreary place of sepulture. Rather is it to the Faithful a resting-place of Hope where the weary body shall be kept in safety till it rise again, to be henceforth immortal. Sown in weakness, raised in power, sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body².

Whether we think of some faithful Christian, whose loss we mourn, or look forward to the day when we shall be ourselves laid in the dust, we may gather inestimable comfort from the lessons of Easter Eve. And who is there that has not an interest in them, since death and the grave must be the lot of all?

Oh! the love, the unspeakable love of Him, Who condescended to come down from Heaven, not only to live and die in a fallen world, but to lie in the tomb, that all who fall asleep in Him might be "prisoners of Hope³!" But why does not the thought of this wondrous love affect me more sensibly? Why is my heart so miserably

¹ S. John viii. 12.

² 1 Cor. xv. 43, 44.

³ Zech. ix. 12.

cold that it breathes scarce a sigh at the sight of my Saviour hanging on the Cross or laid in the rocky tomb? I ask the question in amazement, ashamed of my indifference. And I hear a gentle voice reply: "Thou art not so cold as thou seemest, My child. I have seen thee weep beside the graves of thy loved ones, have known thee to yearn over some who were very dear to thee. God has given thee a tenderer heart than thou carest to confess."

Ah Lord! dear Lord, Thou readest me aright. I have, indeed, a heart which beats with sympathy, but (must I own it?) not for Thee. Here is the saddest confession of all; and alas! it is too true. "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night¹" for my sins, the sins which nailed Thee to the cruel cross, and laid Thee in the darksome grave!

And then, as if to check a vague and dreamy emotion, and encourage me to an earnest surrendering of my life to Him, the sweet, sad Voice makes this direct appeal:—

¹ Jer. ix. 1.

“My Child, this day is thine, I make no promise of the morrow. *Now*, in the solemn hush, succeeding to My death and burial, think upon My Love, and give Me thy whole and undivided heart!”

“Mortal! if life smile on thee, and thou find
All to thy mind,
Think, who did once from Heaven to Hell descend
Thee to befriend:
So shalt thou dare forego, at His dear call,
Thy best, thine all.”

Christian Year.

2. WAITING FOR THE RESURRECTION.

When Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus gave honourable burial to the dead body of Christ¹, certain women, whose faith in Him had stood the shock of His apparent defeat, watched the interment, brought spices for embalming His Body, and devoutly sat over against the sepulchre, mourning their loss².

To these faithful watchers was given the earliest intimation of the Lord's resurrection.

¹ S. John xix. 38, 39.

² S. Luke xxiv. 1-4.

Their constancy was rewarded by their being the first addressed with the joyful tidings, "He is risen¹." And oh! the relief to their anxious minds to learn from the lips of a heavenly visitant that humiliation and seeming failure had been changed into glory and victory. How must their hearts have burned within them as they heard that already the Father had glorified the Son, even as the Son had glorified Him²!

Such we may suppose to have been the feelings of the women, as they gazed into the holy sepulchre.

And now, to give a practical turn to this meditation, we must seriously enquire whether or not there exist among ourselves a like spirit of devotion. Do we at the close of a well-spent Passion-tide long with a holy fervour for the spiritual joys of Easter? or are we looking forward only to its worldly festivities, and to a loosening from the restraints of a Lent too grudgingly observed?

If Easter Day be all that it ought to be to us,

¹ S. Matt. xxviii. 6; S. Luke xxiv. 5, 6. ² S. John xiii. 31, 32.

an occasion of rejoicing on account of our dear Lord's victory, then will each Sunday as it comes round, catch some reflection of its brightness.

"Oh! day of days! shall hearts set free
No 'minstrel rapture' find for thee!
Thou art the Sun of other days,
They shine by giving back thy rays:

Enthroned in thy sovereign sphere
Thou shedd'st thy light on all the year;
Sundays by thee more glorious break,
An Easter Day in every week."

How is it that so few of us find any real pleasure in the weekly festival? Why are its sacred hours so tedious, that we do all we can to shorten them, rising up late, and early going to rest? ay, and why do we secularize the day so far as conscience will allow, even straining our consciences to obtain ever-increasing latitude? Surely, it is because we fail to realise the importance of our Saviour's triumph, or because our love for Him is so dead, that we feel no interest in it.

How unlike the Apostles and the women who were at the tomb by the rising of the sun; or the disciples who later in the day found no

weariness in listening to Christ when, without revealing Himself, He expounded to them the Scriptures, and they besought Him, though it was "toward evening," to abide with them still¹!

But they who would really value an intimate communion with Christ on His Resurrection Day, must have followed Him reverently to the Cross and to the Tomb. If we were with Him every Friday, in prayer and meditation, the following Lord's Day would be to us a day of heart-felt rejoicing. Only let us thankfully appropriate the sacrifice of Calvary, and we shall have grace the better to appreciate the resurrection-triumph. If for us the God-Man died, no less for our sakes did He rise again.

The Silent Week is passing rapidly away. How shall I spend its closing hours but in a solemn watch beside my Saviour's tomb? For me there can be no misgivings; for "I know that my Redeemer liveth." I am confident that on Easter morning I shall hail Him as One risen from the dead; that He will meet me when I kneel at early dawn before His altar, will call

¹ S. Luke xxiv. 13-29.

me by my name, and make Himself known to me "in the breaking of bread."

Oh! this is, indeed, "a night to be much observed unto the Lord" and to be held in ever grateful memory.

"'Tis a night to ponder well
In the tents of Israel,
'Tis the night that sets us free
From sin's dark captivity.
And we all, with lamp in hand,
Waiting for the Bridegroom stand,
With girt loins, and sandalled feet,
Prompt our Risen Lord to greet¹."

O Most Holy Trinity, by Whose eternal scheme of justice and mercy we have been redeemed from the power of the enemy, pardon *my* lukewarmness in the contemplation of so great a Mystery, and give me grace to make my calling and election sure².

*By Thine Agony and bloody Sweat, by Thy Cross
and Passion, by Thy precious Death and Burial,
by Thy glorious Resurrection and Ascension,*

GOOD LORD, DELIVER US.

¹ *Legenda Monastica.*

² 2 S. Peter i. 10.

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